

Speech: British Ambassador to the DRC at the Queen's Birthday Party 2017

Welcome to the QBP 2017 and to this evening.

As you may know, two weeks ago today we had an election in the UK. As you will also know, two terrorist attacks took place during that election campaign period.

This evening is, then, an appropriate moment for me to say that I was touched by and am very grateful for the many messages of support and condolence here following these attacks, including from His Excellency President Kabila to The Queen. So please join me in a moment's silence for all victims of violence, in Manchester and London, in the Kasais and elsewhere in Congo. Thank you.

But these attacks did not stop the British people from voting. We have an electorate of 46 million people, and I wish the CENI all the best in enrolling a similar number of people here, to allow the full and timely implementation of the New Year's Eve agreement.

Following our election we have a government committed to making a success of Brexit and to forging a very close partnership with the rest of Europe from outside the European Union. We have a government which intends to keep the UK's position as the world's 5th largest economy, and remain one of the largest forces in diplomacy, defence and international development, with friends and allies throughout Africa and all around the world.

This will be my last national day speech as British Ambassador here. During my tenure, I have seen the grandeur and natural beauty of the Congo, experienced the incredible hard work, passion, unity and solidarity of the Congolese people. I have seen the amazing talents of Congolese entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, sportsmen and many others, and tonight we celebrate this range of talents.

No one can doubt that the Congo is a country of great potential. And the United Kingdom is supporting the DRC to fulfil this potential:

- Above all, we support dignity for the population, with \$500m worth of support each year through our bilateral development programme, regional programmes and contributions to multilateral organisations. One day, the number of Congolese people in extreme poverty will not be 50 million and rising, but falling towards zero.
- One day, the United Kingdom will no longer, for example, need to provide basic healthcare services to 9 million Congolese people, because, one day, the corruption which undermines all attempts at development will be addressed, and one day natural riches of this nation will flow into the

government treasury.

- One day, the humanitarian aid courageously supplied to millions of Congolese people, to which we are proud to contribute, will no longer be necessary.
- One day, discussions in New York and Geneva will no longer be about massacres, mass graves, and delayed elections. One day we will speak instead about all UN peacekeepers leaving this country because they are no longer needed, as will happen in Ivory Coast in exactly one week's time.

And one day, the DRC government and its development partners will focus their exchanges on co-operation, rather than sanctions, resolutions, accusations of interference, and refused visas.

In short, one day Congo's destiny as a great nation will be realised. Finally, I want to praise our wonderful embassy staff, and their families. No Ambassador could ask for a better team.

And I want to mention the efforts of one particular colleague tonight. He is the first Congolese ever in history to receive the honour Member of the British Empire, which is the equivalent of the Ordres Nationaux Congolais. He works in our embassy office in Goma, and nothing – M23 attacks, volcanic eruptions, nothing – stops him doing his job.

It just remains for me to invite you to raise a toast: – Long live Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whom it is my privilege to represent here. – Long live the partnership between the British and Congolese peoples. – And long live all who work for a stronger Congo.

Enjoy the rest of the evening and thank you.